

AS THOUGHT IS LED  
SONNETS AND LYRICS

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ALICIA K. VAN BUREN



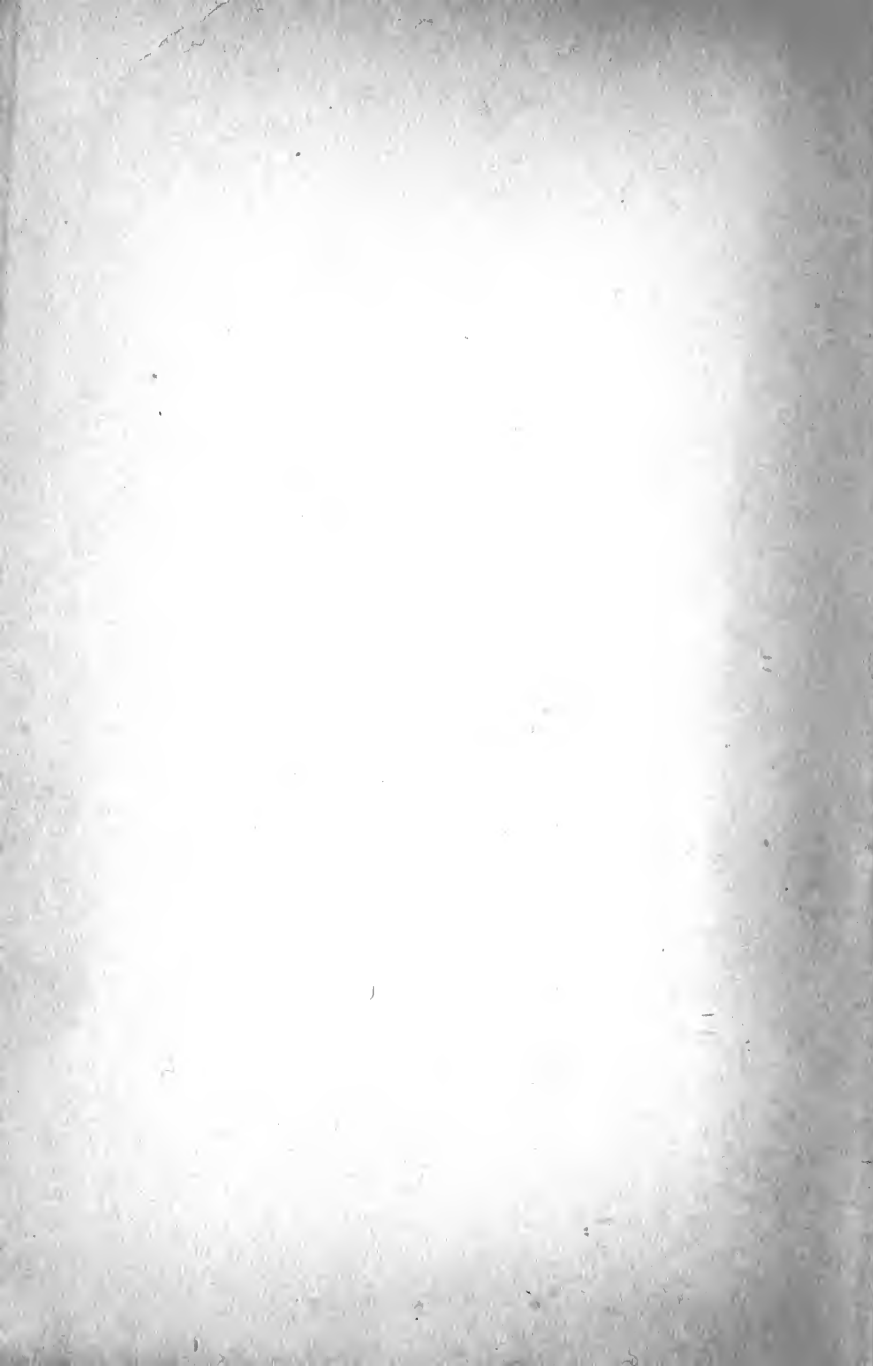
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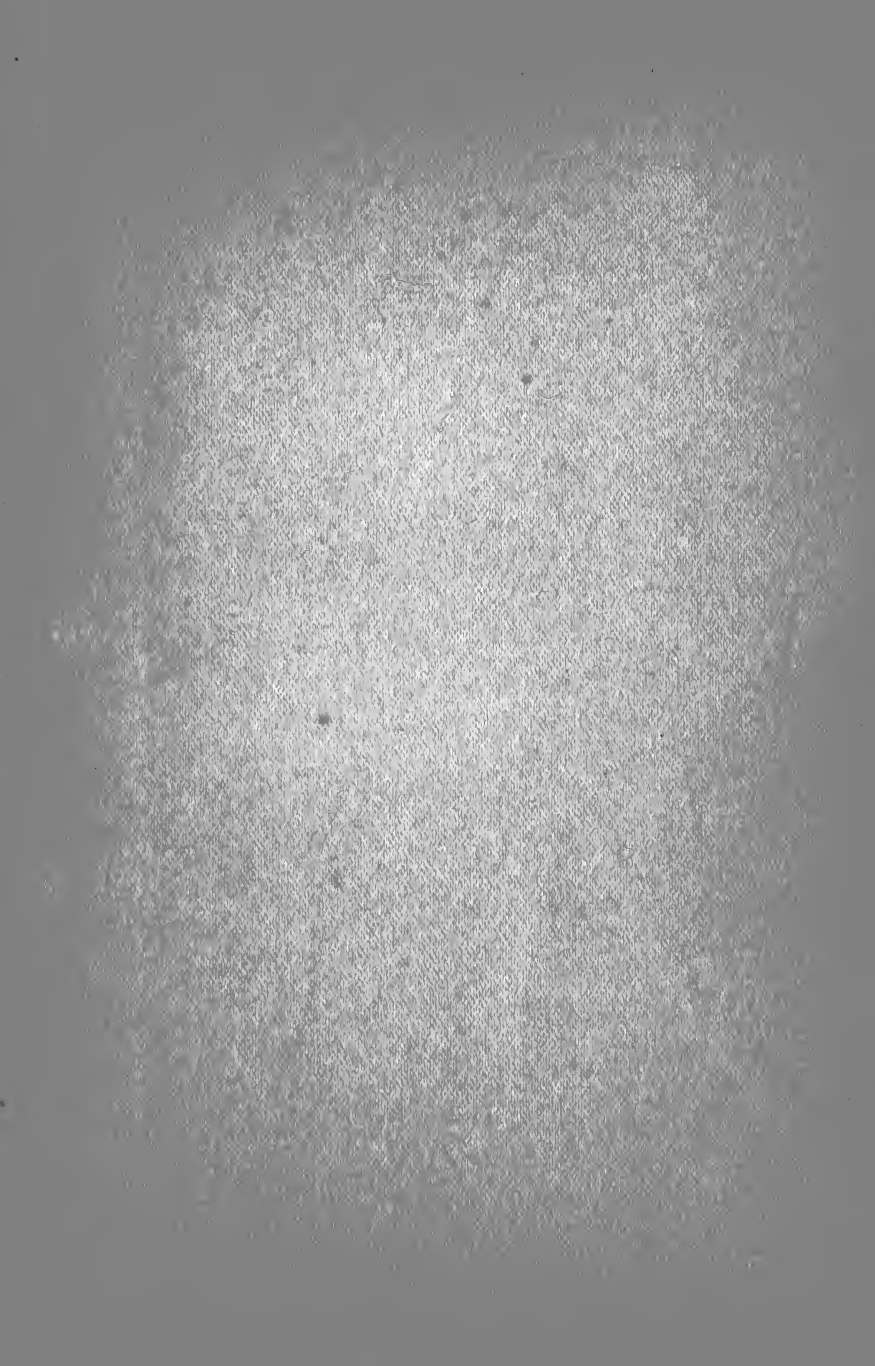
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AS THOUGHT IS THE



AS THOUGHT IS LED

# As I Thought It

THE FIRST AND ONLY

THE ONLY BOOK



BOSTON  
RICHARD C. BAKER  
The Boston Press

# As Thought Is Led

*LYRICS AND SONNETS*

BY

ALICIA K. VAN BUREN



BOSTON  
RICHARD G. BADGER  
The Gorham Press  
1904

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## AS THOUGHT IS LED

A dewy morning with unclouded skies!  
Nothing I crave the kindly earth denies.  
Above, below, around, in all I see,  
A sense of beauty breathes. The old beech tree  
Is gently swaying in the breeze, and low  
And soft its leaves are whispering as though  
They feared to break my rest with too much  
sound—

Their shadows too seem whispering on the ground.  
The birds have ceased to sing and all is still  
As slumberland may be, and down the hill,  
Though glancing right and left, naught holds my  
eye

Save one slow-flitting white-winged butterfly.  
Quite idly do I watch it as it speeds,  
Now here, now there, as though each flower it  
needs

Must try—the iron weed, the golden-rod,  
And milk-weed with its bursting silky pod.  
Then down the hill it flies, at last to light  
For one brief moment on the little gate.  
Thou little gate! perhaps this very night  
Thou 'lt open wide for one—dear love!—I wait.

## THE NEIGHBORING FIRESIDES

A happy man and woman sat beside  
Their fire. Between them was a small chest  
filled  
With garments soft and white; and gladness  
thrilled  
Their hearts as piece by piece they fondly eyed  
Each dainty thing, for each but served to guide  
Their thoughts to one whose coming needs must  
build  
New chambers in their house of love, and gild  
Their lives with self-forgetting joy and pride.

Alone and poor, beside another fire,  
Another sat. Her thoughts were those that stir  
The soul to everlasting griefs and wild  
Despair—death was her eager one desire.  
And soon death came, but not, alas, for her.  
He took the happy mother and her child.



## LONGING

O great-souled makers of immortal songs,  
I love you well. To you what peace I owe!  
How many griefs of mine have you allayed!  
And yet to-day my eager spirit longs  
To utter its own cry of joy or woe  
In some small song that I myself have made.

And so, you master singers, great and good,  
You fail me now. Though oft in you I've found  
Relief, to-day you leave me sad and lone,  
And like to one who, craving motherhood,  
And seeing many childish faces round,  
Enjoys them not—through longing for her  
own.

## CHEROKEE ROSES

Before my door are roses everywhere,  
But none O Cherokee! are fair as thine.  
So thick upon thy breast the white blooms shine  
They seem but one great snowy blossom rare;  
And yet, two months ago, as I stood there  
Beneath the fir round which thy tendrils twine,  
I dreamed not that thy leafless straggling vine  
Would some day all this vestal beauty wear.

And thou, my friend, who seemed so commonplace  
When first I looked into thy clear true eyes,  
Thou too didst own an unseen inner grace  
Which, even more than beauty, beautifies.  
I never dreamed thy kindly rugged face  
Could ever look so good and brave and wise.

## THE WORLD IS STRANGE

The world is strange : below the hill  
I hear an unknown call ;  
One cry, and then the air is still  
Again—and that is all.

A stroller walks along the road,  
A horseman gallops by :  
I know them not, nor their abode,  
Nor where they go, nor why.

This once, perhaps, they cross my days  
And never any more ;  
And they and I go separate ways,  
The ways we went before.

They touch my life this once, and bring  
So very little change,  
It seems a sad unmeaning thing.  
Ah me, the world is strange !

## LOVE'S INCONSISTENCY

One day when thou wert ill and spent with pain,  
I sat beside thy crib and tried in vain  
To make thee sleep. When murmured lullabies  
And soothing touch at last had closed thine eyes,  
I scarcely stirred, all fearful lest I make  
A sound, and thou to suffering should'st wake.

Again, my darling child, art thou asleep.  
All day, beside thy little grave, I weep.  
From pain and sorrow ever art thou free;  
And yet—Oh, how I long to waken thee!

## REPRESSION

Of much repression be not vain,  
Nor think it always best:  
Those feelings causing needless pain  
Are better unexpressed;  
But if we may, to some pale cheek,  
A smile by kind words win,  
And we those words refuse to speak,  
Then is repression sin.

## THE SEED

God sows the selfsame truth in every heart—  
A seed from which at birth a plant doth start;  
But every plant a different blossom shows  
According to the soil wherein it grows.

Condemn no creed! Dig deep beneath the sod  
And at the root thou'lt find the truth of God.

## TO-DAY AND TOMORROW

To-day we pray for death,  
    Tomorrow pray for life,  
And almost every breath  
    Is drawn in strife.  
If death came when we willed  
No grave would be unfilled;  
If life came when we prayed  
    No grave be made.

## THE ONLY WAY

I lost my way when in the woods one night  
And took a path I ne'er before had known.  
A storm was threatening, and it had grown  
Quite dark, and moon and stars were hid from  
sight.

Then round my heart a numbing sense of fright  
Pressed hard—I seemed so utterly alone!  
Till through the gloom a flash of lightning shone  
And I beheld the *homeward* path aright.

And so, dear love, whenever pain or care  
Or disappointment darken any day;  
When hope is almost vanquished by despair,  
And every thought is wandering astray,  
One word from thee will brighten all the air  
And lead my feet along the *loveward* way.



## RECONCILED

We sometimes grudge the hours of rest,  
Our minds too feverish for sleep;  
And toss upon our beds, distressed  
That we the daytime may not keep.

There are so many things to do,  
So many things must still be seen,  
And day's swift moments are too few  
For idle night to intervene.

But slowly, now, through every limb  
There creeps a grateful weariness,  
And gradually the mind grows dim,  
The heavy eyelids downward press.

How sweet the dreamland where we go,  
The long night that before us lies!  
Ah! welcome Death! If only so  
Thy cool soft fingers close mine eyes!

## HYPNOSIS

I love the little, swift, tempestuous brook,  
Whose bubbling waters, cool and fresh and  
sweet,  
Invite the thirsty wanderer's weary feet  
To where the tall trees make a shady nook.

I love to lie there in the pleasant shade  
And watch the changing waters glide and gleam,  
Until the living world becomes a dream,  
And I myself into a dream am made.

## DEFERRED

Each day I 've worn a smile to hide  
Suspense and pain thine absence made,  
Till now my smiles have slowly died,  
As garments too long used must fade.

And though thou 'rt come again and brought  
Relief from all those haunting fears,  
To tell the joy I feel I 've naught,  
O dearest one, but sobs and tears.

## PROMPTINGS

For me the sunbeams glance and glow,  
And soft winds breathe. On me all day  
The thriftless happy birds bestow  
Their lavish carols, blithe and gay.  
For me with fresher beauty bloom  
The flowers, and shed their faint perfume.

So sweet are night, noon, eve and morn,  
My happy heart is like to break  
If from its joy there be not born  
A tender love for thy dear sake.  
As nature showers her gifts on me  
So let me shower my love on thee.

## UNCONSCIOUS WORTH

To L. D. S.

The sun one day looked down upon the earth  
And filled it with a light so gold and rare,  
Each living thing awoke and all the air  
Grew musical with sweet content and mirth;  
And forest trees and tiny plants gave birth  
To tender leaves and fragrant blossoms fair.  
But though the sun shed beauty everywhere  
'T was all unmindful of its own great worth.

So thou, dear one, unconscious of thy power,  
Called forth the good that lay within each heart;  
And oft thy gentle spirit's kindly rays—  
Like sunshine falling on the night-chilled flower—  
Have made love bloom and tender impulse start  
When life seemed dark through all its hopeless days.

## MOTHER MARY

The Mother Mary sat beside  
The manger, rough and bare,  
And watched with happiness and pride  
The infant sleeping there.

All memory of her pain was past;  
A new joy had begun.  
Her mother-love would fain forecast  
The glory of her son:—

Her son who was to be a king!  
A king with wealth and power.  
She knew not that the years would bring  
That last dark awful hour.

Like Mary every mother turns  
Her eager tender eyes  
Upon her own dear child and yearns  
That he to fame may rise.

But, oh, if she perchance could see  
The hatred and the scorn,  
The long-borne bitter agony,  
The hero's crown of thorn!

## REST

With full content my tranquil heart is blessed  
As underneath the peaceful trees I lie.  
Sweet lulling sounds—the wind's low rhythmic  
sigh,  
The bird's glad singing, clear and unrepressed,  
The anxious hum of bees as fearful lest  
They miss one flower—like some soft lullaby  
Have filled my soul with peace; and ear and eye  
And heart and mind are gently soothed to rest.

Dear love, my days were long and sad till thou  
Didst make the world seem fair. But well I  
know  
That those remembered griefs, which once did bow  
My soul, this happy restfulness bestow.  
In truth, how could I feel this gladness now  
Had I not known the bitterness of woe?

## THE BEECH TREE

The solitary beech stands dark and bare  
Against the winter sky. Rough winds have torn  
Its leaves away; and now it seems to mourn  
The cruel loss of all that made it fair.  
When clothed in its full green 't was wont to share  
Its sheltered peace; birds' fragile nests were  
borne

Amid its leafy boughs, and many a worn  
Sad soul beneath its shade dismissed his care.

My loveless life once seemed thus bare and stern  
Till fresh, unhopd-for hopes changed every  
part:

For now I love and know love's sweet return,  
And now I feel life's quickening influence start  
Like leaves in spring; and every day I yearn  
To shed my gladness o'er some other heart.



## UNCHANGED

Once more beside thy shore I stand,  
My own St. Johns,  
And every tree through all the land—  
Like one who dons  
His richest garb wherein to greet  
The honored guest—  
In bright array and fragrance sweet  
Is newly dressed.  
Though newly dressed the selfsame trees  
I knew last spring—  
Through whose green boughs the selfsame breeze  
Is whispering—  
Are here again to welcome me :  
The slender pine,  
The moss-hung china-berry tree,  
The jasmine vine  
That twines about the old dead fir,  
The orange bloom  
That scents the air when soft winds stir  
Its faint perfume,  
The Spanish-bayonet whose crown  
Too heavy weighs,  
The pampas-grass, now dry and brown,  
That idly sways;—  
They all are now just as before  
Through many and many a year ;  
And some day I shall come no more,  
But they will still be here.

## A MEMORY

To L. K. F.

It is the fairest of October days;  
Upon the hills the trees are all ablaze  
With red, red-brown and gold; and left and right  
The valley fields are bathed in purple light.

The air is filled with Autumn's witching sound:  
The gentle fall of beechnuts on the ground;  
The sharp repeated raps the woodpeckers beat;  
The rustle of the grass beneath my feet;

And, merged in one deep rhythmic monotone,  
The hum of bees, the insects' ceaseless drone,  
The far-off songs of birds, and in the leaves  
The wind's low sigh, like one who loves and  
grieves.

How soft the breeze! it hardly stirs my hair.  
How warm the sun! the mantle that I wear  
Is thrown aside. Ah me! the earth is clad  
In bright unwonted charm—but I am sad.

For on a day like this you came to me  
Last fall. We stood beneath this very tree.  
I see you still and hear each word you said,  
But now I stand alone—and you are dead.

## HEREAFTER

Should'st thou still live, belovèd, and I die,  
I pray that hopeless sorrow may not press  
Too long and heavily. In thy distress,  
Let not thy grief-enshrouded heart deny  
The words of solace that may soothe its sigh.  
Draw not apart from those whose tenderness  
And sympathy would make thy sorrow less,  
But strive to see earth's joys with undimmed eye.

And some day thou shalt hear a voice and see  
A smile reminding thee, perchance, of mine;  
And from that voice and smile a love may  
grow  
Again within thy heart. God grant that she  
Who calls it forth may make thy pathway shine  
With joy as great as thou hast made me know.

## INSPIRATION

Have you not heard the harsh unpleasant tone  
That hands unskilled draw from the violin?  
Instead of those sweet strains they strive to win  
There comes a cry or rough discordant moan;  
But when one plays to whom the strings are known,  
A gentle touch will seem to wake within  
Its breast a soul to his own soul akin,  
Till sound and feeling into one are grown.

Thus, long ago, 't was your dear self who woke  
My slumbering heart to life and love. To none  
Had it responded rightly till you spoke;  
And then life's subtle music was begun,  
For love had claimed its own and at one stroke  
Had made thy soul and mine to merge in one.

## EUTHANASIA

In that sweet hour before the end of day,  
Just as the sun in silence steals away,  
It sheds upon the sky and sea and shore  
A radiant light they never knew before.

And so 't is said that ere the spirit goes  
At end of life, the wearied body knows  
A brief and new-born ease and strength, the while  
The lines of pain become a peaceful smile.

## TELEPATHY

There are wise men, I know, who teach  
That souls—though far apart—  
With kindred souls may hold some speech.

To-night, although my lips are dumb,  
I call with all my heart;  
Then why, dear love, do you not come?

## AN IMPRESSION

Inquiring, wistful eyes that hope somewhere  
To find new happiness, yet fearful lest  
Another sadness rise. A brow distressed  
With thinking oft of days too full of care,  
And marked by cruel lines—but still how fair!  
Wide nostrils that deep breathings of unrest  
Have fashioned so, and pallid lips compressed  
To check a moan—of what unknown despair?

I know not what upon that face has wrought  
Such grievous marks; but, underneath its gloom,  
I see the dormant powers of joy, which naught  
But love itself can waken and illumine.  
O would, sweet piteous face, I had the might  
To drive away thy gloom and bring the light!

## To M. L. K.

In vain I seek for fitting terms, my dear,  
Wherewith to tell you all the love I feel.  
Alas, the blundering words do but conceal  
The heart's intent. I am like those who hear  
The mind's ethereal music, sweet and clear,  
And yet whose fingers, lacking skill or ease,  
Bring naught but painful discords from the  
keys.



## ACTION

Beneath the hill there runs a spring  
Whose cooling waters oft give cheer  
To some poor stranger drawing near  
To rest him from his wandering.

The ceaseless flowing of the stream  
Doth keep its waters clear and cool;  
'T would soon become a stagnant pool  
Were it to pause to drone and dream.

So he who spends his every hour  
To dream and feel and not to do,  
Must needs lose force and stagnate too:  
In naught but action is there power.

## WHEN TO COME BACK

My loved ones sat with me outside our door  
Last eve. All bright and calm the river lay,  
Save when some leaping fish with sudden splash  
Made wide dark ripples on the smooth expanse.  
The faint breeze scarcely stirred the tiny isles  
Of hyacinth that floated with the tide,  
Nor seemed to move the sail-boats, far away,  
Of weary fishermen returning home.  
Above the long dark line of oaks and pines  
That marks the farther shore, the sky was tinged  
With purple hues and pink. One star alone  
Through misty clouds shone dimly overhead.  
So peaceful and so silent earth and sky  
And river were, that we grew silent too,  
Submitting heart and mind to nature's mood.

From out the dreamy realm of formless thought  
Rose memories of you, dear love; not those  
That fill the heart with pain, but only such  
As make its sadness sweet. Then all at once  
A mocking-bird close by began to sing.  
My soul, I think, was surely never thrilled  
By lovelier music. And whilst thus it sang  
Through all my being rushed the sudden thought—  
I know not why—that you yourself were near.

The old belief was sweet to me, dear one,  
That you were far away from us, at rest  
Within a happier world. But if in truth  
You can, as some report, come back at times  
To those you love, and share in part their lives,  
O come I pray but as you came last night,  
Come when our minds are full of tranquil thoughts,  
And peace environs us and all our world.

## BECAUSE I LOVE YOU SO

Because I love you so my glad heart thrilled  
When you confessed your love. What longings  
lay

Within my soul to make your life a day  
Of happiness. My every thought was filled  
With eager hope that I might grow more skilled  
Each hour to shed new light upon your way,  
Withholding naught that pleasure might convey—

E'en yielding life itself, if you so willed.

Alas, I 've learned such anxious love doth bring  
Its sadness too. For oft I yearn to find  
Approving looks: uneasy fears upspring  
When I perceive them not, and words unkind,  
Perhaps, I say; and then I grieve to know  
You 've turned away—because I love you so.

## MOTHER AND CHILD

My child! How yearns my heart o'er thee, as  
pressed

To its quick throbs thy fragile form doth lie.

Wert thou not mine thy helplessness would cry  
For sympathy; but in thy mother's breast

What fears for thee! With each new life unrest,

I know, is born, and ere distress draw nigh

To thee I long, dear child, to learn how I  
May check its coming or may guard thee best.

I would that thou could'st have my nature o'er,

That all thy childish griefs I might divine,

And make each bliss, that I once longed for,  
thine;

But if thy soul be one I ne'er before

Have known, God grant I love thee all the more,

For thou may'st have a greater soul than mine.

## THESE APRIL DAYS

These April days, ah, who can say  
Just what the weather has in store?  
This morning, when with steady pour  
The rain beat down, and skies were gray,  
Ah, who could guess the sun's bright ray  
Would beam before the day was o'er?  
These April days, ah, who can say  
Just what the weather has in store?

My love is sweet as an April day,  
And though no welcome smile she wore  
When last we met, I 'll try once more—  
This time perhaps she 'll bid me stay.  
These April days, ah, who can say  
Just what the weather has in store?

## THE MOON-BEAM BRIDGE

O golden moon, as thou dost slowly rise  
Above the beautiful St. Johns, how fair  
Thou art to one who is oppressed by care  
And looks at thee through longing tear-dimmed  
eyes.

A bridge of gold across the water lies;  
From thee it stretches firm and smooth to where  
I stand. O would that I might cross, and share  
With thee the glories of thy Paradise!

And yet, dear moon, if thou should'st let me in,  
I might not feel the happiness, nor see  
The light and beauty, that I hoped to win.  
Perhaps upon this earth I 'd yearn to be,  
For it, 't is said, though full of pain and sin,  
Is still than thou more fair, when seen from thee.

## THE OLD SCHOOL-HOUSE

We started out to find the old school-house,  
The oldest house in Orange Park. At last,  
With limbs that ached from walking through the  
sand,

We reached the broken gate; and up the path,  
All overgrown with brambles, briars and weeds,  
We slowly went until we reached the porch.  
All rotted and unsafe we found the floor;  
And fallen limbs from overhanging trees  
Had broken through the porch's rotten roof.  
The roof itself was green with moss and ferns.  
The doors were gone; the house stood open, free  
To wanderers tame and wild, to man and beast.  
The sun poured through the windows' broken panes  
On fallen plaster littering floor and stairs.  
The straight high mantel-piece that framed the  
wide

Old-fashioned hearth, alone stood firm and dark—  
With strange suggestions of an old-time cheer.  
Beyond the doorway, in the rear, there spread  
Long level stretches of the stately pines,  
Of burly live-oaks, gray with hanging moss,  
Of bayonetted palms and red-brown fields  
Of wiry grass. The old coquina steps,  
Beneath the doorway's sill, lay overturned—  
Grim monuments of long-departed days.



A chill depression pained my heart and grew  
More strong as, one by one, there stood revealed  
The signs of desolation and decay.  
And so at last we left the bleak old house;  
But could not leave, alas, the heavy weight  
Of saddened thought; for in our minds still clung  
The images it had evoked.

But soon  
A winding in the shady road disclosed  
A gleam of light—the beautiful St. Johns.  
All suddenly it broke upon the sight,  
With miles of water open to the sky  
And flashing back the splendor of the sun.  
It seemed a symbol of eternal years!  
Just so it must have looked in that far time  
When Indian fishers in their light canoes  
Or Spanish voyagers in high-prowed ships  
Moved up and down its shores.

Our hearts grew light;  
We lost the pain man's handiwork had wrought  
And felt the peace unchanging nature gives.

NOTE: The school-house above-mentioned was situated on the plantation where Harriet Beecher Stowe first resided in Florida. It was recently burnt to the ground.

## FADING FLOWERS

Last month the jasmine was in bloom :  
Each blossom, like a golden star,  
Gleamed in the light, and shed afar  
Its sweet and delicate perfume.

Though jasmine-buds no more delight  
The eye, before me now I see,  
Upon the climbing Cherokee,  
A hundred roses, snowy-white.

And soon the great magnolia trees  
Among their glossy leaves will bear  
The white and massy blooms that share  
Their heavy odors with the breeze.

And so, through all the burgeoning year,  
The various flowers shall bloom and fade.  
Oh why was all this beauty made  
When it so soon must disappear?

## IN FLORIDA

In Florida now shines the sun of spring;  
And there the roses bloom, the glad birds sing;  
    And there, before my door, the river lies,  
    Its bosom glowing in the sunset skies  
Or in the morning sunlight glimmering.

The breezes stir the wreaths of moss that swing  
From live-oak boughs; and from the tall pines  
    fling  
    The brown cones down; and sweet the odors  
    rise  
        In Florida.

O birds and flowers and trees, around you cling  
What tender memories! My thoughts now wing  
    Themselves to you. Where nothing greets the  
    eyes  
    Save snow and leafless trees, the chilled heart  
    sighs  
For all the light and life the days now bring  
        In Florida.

## NOVEMBER

To stay in doors to-day were best,  
For nature seems to be oppressed  
With melancholy and unrest.

The sun has ceased to shine. The air  
Is filled with leaves the rough winds tear  
From off the trees—now almost bare.

Poor trees! how strange and weak you seem  
Without your leaves. Ah, who would dream  
You once controlled the sun's fierce beam.

The chilly winds rush by with low  
Sad moans. Perhaps, dear trees, they know—  
And grieve that they must leave you so.

A flock of black-birds draws in sight;  
Their chattering cry is shrill with fright  
Lest evil overtake their flight.

My own mood, too, is such that less  
Than nature's mourning and distress  
Would fill my soul with heaviness.

So I will close the door, and here,  
Beside the log's fresh-kindled cheer,  
Will warm my heart and banish fear.

## MY VIOLIN

My violin, with tender, loving care,  
Is resting near my heart. It seems to share  
Each quickened throb, and as I draw the bow  
Across the trembling strings, they seem to know  
My inmost heart and what lies hidden there:

My heart through which, (though life seems  
wholly fair),  
There thrills a sadness like some deep despair,  
Which I would fain conceal, but needs must  
show  
My violin.

I touch the strings; before I am aware  
They learn my grief, and sad notes fill the air;  
In melody that seems to overflow  
With tearful tones, they utter all my woe.  
Ah, is it kind with anguish thus to tear  
My violin?

## SPRING

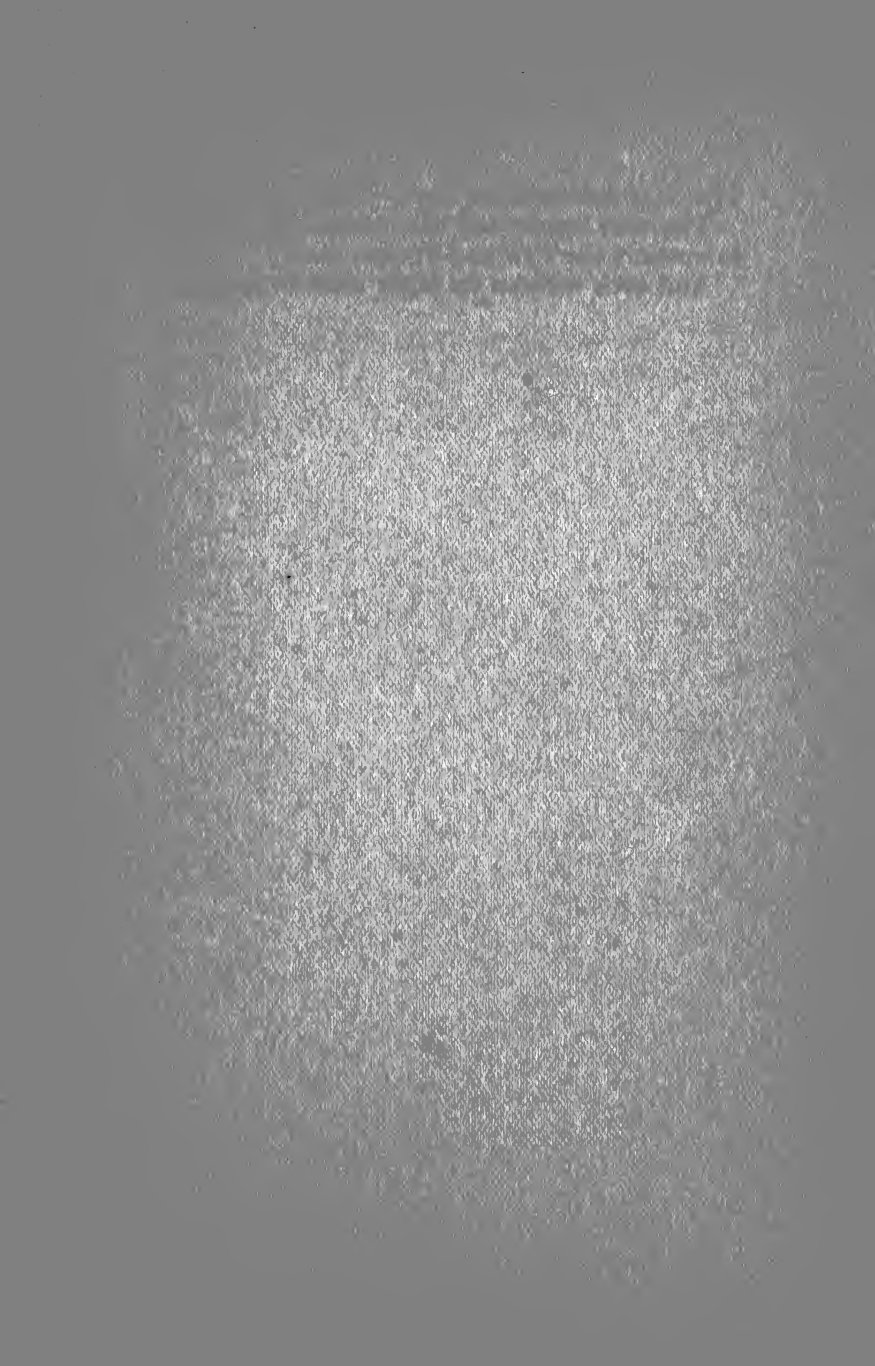
The Spring has come, and everywhere  
The flowers have bloomed, and trees long bare  
Have put forth leaves, and birds long still  
With raptured notes the woodlands fill.

O would that thou to me could'st bring  
Such bloom and joy as these, dear Spring;  
That thou could'st make me also long  
To lift my voice once more in song.

## MEMORY

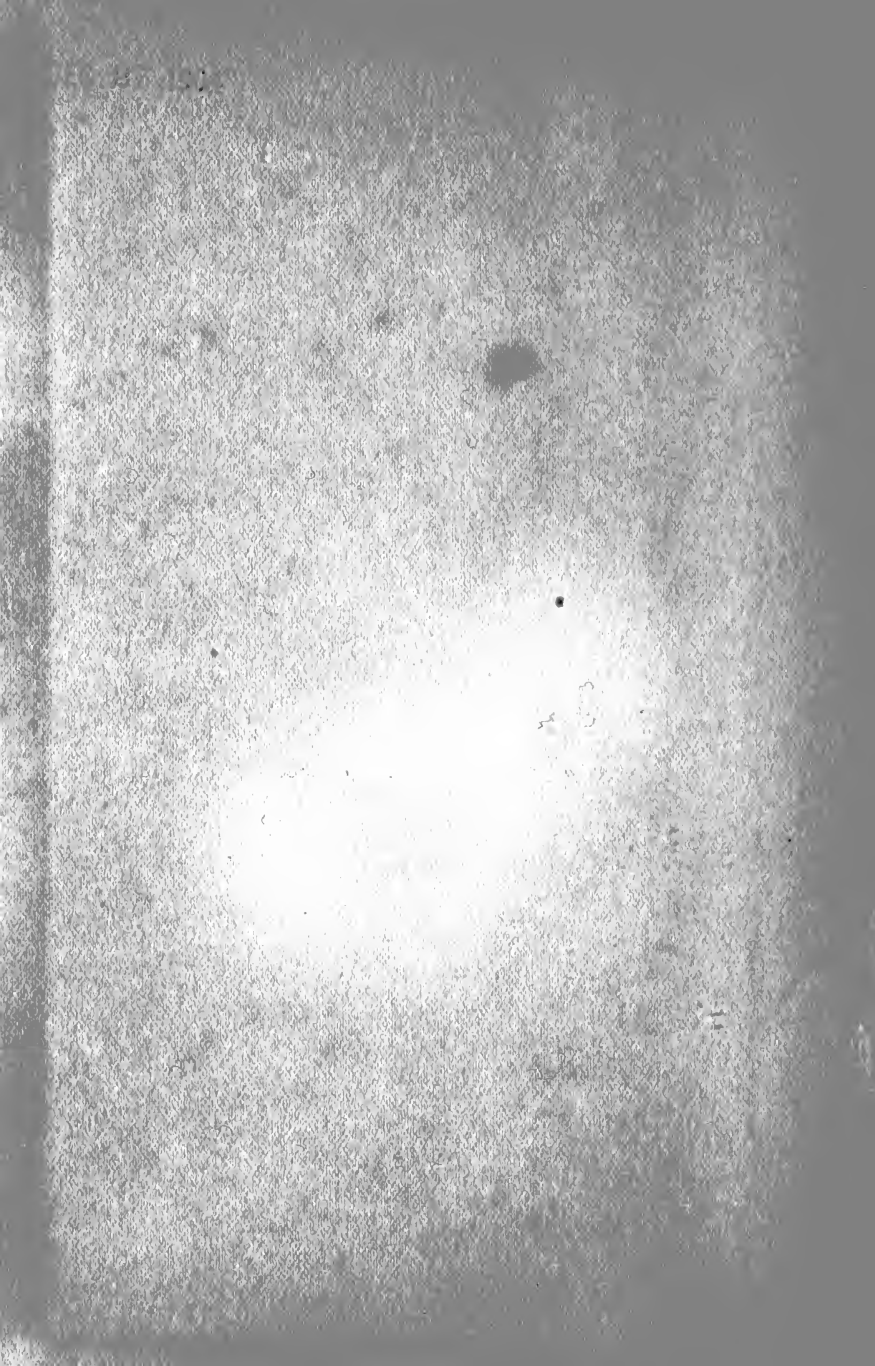
The dear remembered days—they are not dead!  
The soul transcends the momentary thought.  
In memory the Past and Present wed,  
And each without its other sinks to naught.













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